

Message Text

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ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01
INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15
USIA-06 OMB-01 AID-05 SAJ-01 /074 W
-----150522Z 042781 /21

R 150130Z FEB 77
FM AMEMBASSY RANGOON
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3027
INFO USLO PEKING
AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
AMEMBASSYSJAKARTA
AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR
AMEMBASSY MANILA
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE
AMEMBASSY TAIPEI
AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE
AMCONSUL HONG KONG
AMCONSUL MANDALAY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 3 RANGOON 0450

E.O. 116"2: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, BM, CH
SUBJ: MADAME CHOU VISITS BURMA

REF: RANGOON 0366

SUMMARY

A1. MME CHOU'S VISIT WAS MARKED BY THE MOST ELABORATE
OUTPOURING OF FELICITATIONS FOR A FOREIGN VISITOR TO
BURMA IN NEARLY TWO DECADES. IN PUBLIC STATEMENTS, NE
WIN EMPHASIZED WHAT HE TERMED "TRADITIONAL" CHINA-BURMA
FRIENDSHIP AND THE NEED TO SETTLE ANY PROBLEMS BY
DISCUSSIONS. MME CHOU PRAISED BURMA'S NON-ALIGNED
FOREIGN POLICY, PARTICULARLY ITS OPPOSITION TO
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"IMPERIALISM AND HEGEMONISM," AND CALLED FOR FURTHER
DEVELOPMENT OF FRIENDLY RELATIONS ON THE BASIS OF THE FIVE

PRINCIPLES OF PEACEFUL COEXISTENCE (WHICH WERE JOINTLY
INITIATED BY CHINA AND BURMA).

2. THE BURMESE WERE ATTEMPTING TO RE-CREATE THE SPIRIT

OF THE 1950'S AND EARLY 1960'S ERA OF GOOD RELATIONS WITH CHINA, IN THE HOPE THAT THIS MIGHT PROMOTE A REDUCTION IN CHINESE SUPPORT FOR BURMA'S MOST SERIOUS INTERNAL SECURITY PROBLEM, THE BURMA COMMUNIST PARTY. WHETHER OR NOT THE VISIT CONTRIBUTES TO THE STRENGTHENING OF SINO-BURMESE TIES AND THUS TO THE ADVANTAGE OF CHINA IN ITS PRESUMED RIVALRY WITH THE SOVIETS WILL DEPEND ON THE IMPACT OF THE VISIT ON PRC SUPPORT OF THE BCP. AS OF NOW, NO SUCH IMPACT IS DISCERNIBLE, AND THE VISIT MUST BE RATED A PROBABLE FAILURE, AT LEAST FROM THE BURMESE STANDPOINT. PRC AIMS FOR THE VISIT ARE NOT CLEAR TO US. ALTHOUGH THE VISIT PROVIDED THE CHINESE AN OCCASION FOR SOME RHETORIC PERTINENT TO THE SINO-SOVIET DISPUTE, MME CHOU DID NOT EVEN INDUCE THE BURMESE TO JOIN HER IN DENOUNCING "HEGEMONISM." END SUMMARY

3. THE VISIT - MADAME CHOU EN-LAI (ZENG YING-CHAO), VICE CHAIRMAN OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE OF THE NATIONAL PEOPLE'S CONGRESS OF THE PRC, PAID A "FRIENDSHIP AND GOODWILL" VISIT TO BURMA FEBRUARY 5-11. SHE WAS ACCOMPANIED BY A 16-MEMBER DELEGATION INCLUDING DEPUTY FOREIGN MINISTER HAN NEIN-LUNG AND ASIAN AFFAIRS DEPUTY DIRECTOR CHENG JUI-SHENG. DURING THE VISIT MME CHOU MET WITH PRESIDENT NE WIN, COUNCIL OF STATE SECRETARY GENERAL SAN YU AND PRIME MINISTER SEIN WIN. SHE TOURED PAGAN (WHERE THERE WAS NO REPORTED DISCUSSION OF THE SACKING OF THIS ANCIENT BURMESE CAPITAL BY 13TH CENTURY CHINESE-MONGOL INVADERS), AND IN RANGOON VISITED THE SHWEDAGON PAGODA AND LAID THE USUAL WREATH AT THE TOMB OF NATIONAL MARTYR BOGYOKE AUNG SAN.

4. THE VISIT WAS MARKED BY EXTRAORDINARY BURMESE MEASURES
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TO HONOR THEIR GUEST. PRESIDENT NE WIN PERSONALLY SUPERVISED THE ARRANGEMENTS, WHICH INCLUDED IMPRESSIVE ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE CEREMONIES FEATURING 21 GUNSAUTES, GUARDS OF HONOR, AND MASSES OF LANZIN PARTY YOUTH AND MEMBERS OF OTHER ORGANIZATIONS ASSEMBLED AND BROUGHT IN FOR THE OCCASION BY THE GOVERNMENT. TENS OF THOUSANDS (ALL ORGANIZED BY THE GUB) LINED THE ROAD TO SHOUT SLOGANS AND WAVE FLAGS AS SHE WAS DRIVEN TO AND FROM THE AIRPORT. NE WIN AND HIS WIFE ACCOMPANIED HER TO PAGAN, WHERE SIMILARLY ENTHUSIASTIC CROWDS WERE ORGANIZED TO GREET HER. THE BURMESE PRESS WAS BLANKETED THROUGHOUT THE VISIT WITH PICTURES, REPORTS OF HER ACTIVITIES, AND FEATURES AND EDITORIALS PRAISING HER REVOLUTIONARY ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND EULOGIZING BURMA-CHINA FRIENDSHIP. (AN EXAMPLE OF THE RHETORIC: "IT WAS A DAY OF JOY, OF EXHILARATION, AND OF GROWING CONFIDENCE. IT WAS AN UNFORGETTABLE DAY IN THE HISTORY OF SINO-BURMESE RELATIONS... IRREPRESSIBLE FEELINGS OF ECSTASY AND JOY WELLED UP IN ME, FOR THAT DAY, THE 5TH OF FEBRUARY 1977, WAS THE DAY ON WHICH HER

EXCELLENCY MADAME TENG YING-CHAO...ARRIVED IN BURMA FOR A GOODWILL VISIT.")

5. OBSERVERS HERE SAY THERE HAS NOT BEEN SUCH AN OUTPOUR-OF FELICITATIONS AND HEROIC PROTOCOL MEASURES TO HONOR A FOREIGN VISITOR SINCE THE 1950'S VISITS OF CHOU EN-LAI, KRUSHCHEV, AND TITO.

6. PUBLIC STATEMENTS - PUBLIC STATEMENTS WERE LIMITED TO TWO BANQUET SPEECHES BY NE WIN AND TWO BY MME CHOU.

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7. NE WIN STRESSED HIS LONG PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP WITH CHOU EN-WAIS(BY PRC COUNT, CHOU VISITED BURMA NINE TIMES AND NE WIN HAS VISITED CHINA SIX TIMES), AND EXPRESSED RENEWED SYMPATHY ON CHOU'S DEATH AND THE OTHER MISFORTUNES WHICH BEFELL THE CHINESE IN 1976. HE SPOKE OF THE "TRADITIONALLY CLBSE AND FRIENDLY" REWATIONS BETWEEN CHINA AND BURMA AND EMPHASIZED THAT "EVEN WHEN DIFFERENCES ARISE,SAS THEY SOME-TIMES UNAVOIDABLY DO, THEY ARE SETTLED BY LEADERS OF THE TWO SIDES IN FRANK AND FRIENDLY DISCUSSIONS. FOR INSTANCE, EARLY IN 1960 PREMIER CHOU EN-WAI AND MYSELF WERE ABLE TO SETTLE IN PEKING, THROUGH FRIENDLY TALKS,...THE BOUNDARY

QUESTION....SIMILARLY, IF FRANK AND FRIENDLY DISCUSSIONS
ARE HELD IN ALL MATTERS IN A SPIRIT OF GOODWILL, NO
PROBLEM CAN LONG REMAIN UNRESOLVED." FINALLY, HE EXPRESSED
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CONFIDENCE THAT MME CHOU'S "VISIT AND THE
FRIENDLY TALKS WE HAVE HAD ON MATTERS OF MUTUAL INTEREST
TO OUR TWO COUNTRIES HAVE INDEED USHERED IN A NEW STAGE IN
THE TRADITIONAL FRIENDSHIP BETWEEN OUR TWO COUNTRIES.
8. MME CHOU EXPRESSED THANKS FOR THE "ENTHUSIASTIC" WEL-
COME. TURNING TO FOREIGN POLICY, SHE SAID, "FOR SOUTHEAST
ASIA THE SITUATION CONTINUES TO DEVELOP IN A DIRECTION
FAVORABLE TO THE PEOPLE'S UNITED STRUGGLE AGAINST HEGE-
MONISM AND TO THE INDEPENDENCE OF NATIONS. UNDER PRESIDENT
NE WIN'S LEADERSHIP,...BURMA HAS CONSISTENTLY PURSUED AN
INDEPENDENT AND NON-ALIGNED FOREIGN POLICY..AND OPPOSED
IMPERIALISM AND HEGEMONISM. THIS IS HIGHLY ADMIRABLE AND
APPRECIATED BY THE CHINESE GOVERNMENT AND PEOPLE." SHE
SPOKE OF THE "TRADITIONAL PAUKPHAW (KINSHIP) FRIENDSHIP BE-
TWEEN THE CHINESE AND BURMESE PEOPLES" AND NOTED THAT "CHINA
AND BURMA JOINTLY INITIATED THE FAMOUS FIVE PRINCIPLES OF
PEACEFUL COEXISTENCE AND SATISFACTORILY SETTLED THEIR
BOUNDARY QUESTION LEFT OVER BY HISTORY." PLACING CHINA
AND BURMA BOTH IN THE CATEGORY OF "DEVELOPING COUNTRIES
BELONGING TO THE THIRD WORLD," SHE SAID THAT "OUR TWO
PEOPLES FACE THE COMMON TASK OF BUILDING THEIR COUNTRIES
AND OPPOSING IMPERIALISM AND HEGEMONISM." SHE EXPRESSED
HOPE THAT "FRIENDLY RELATIONS BETWEEN OUR TWO COUNTRIES
WILL GROW STRONGER AND DEVELOP FURTHER ON THE BASIS OF THE
FIVE PRINCIPLES OF PEACEFUL COEXISTENCE." IN CLOSING SHE
SAID THAT "THE FRIENDSHIP BETWEEN OUR TWO PEOPLES WILL
FLOW ON FOREVER LIKE THE YANGTSE AND IRRAWADDY RIVERS."
9. COMMENT: - BEHIND ALL THE SOCIALIST POMP AND OVER-
BLOWN RHETORIC (PARTICULARLY ON THE BURMESE SIDE--IT MUST
BE DIFFICULT TO OUT-DO THE CHINESE IN THIS SPHERE), WE SEE
SEVERAL INTERESTING ASPECTS OF THE VISIT.

--BURMESE AIMS. THE BURMESE WERE CLEARLY SEEKING TO
RE-CREATE THE IMAGE OF THE "PAUKPHAW" ERA OF GOOD RELATIONS
WITH CHINA, WHICH WAS HIGHLIGHTED BY THE "SPIRIT OF
BANDUNG" SETTLEMENT OF THE BORDER DISPUTE* THE 1961
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CHINESE AID AGREEMENT, AND VERY MINIMAL (IF ANY) PRC
SUPPORT FOR THE BURMA COMMUNIST PARTY (BCP) INSURGENTS.
THIS ERA ENDED IN 1967 WHEN THE POLITICAL ZEAL OF THE

CULTURAL REVOLUTION SPILLED OVER INTO BURMA'S LARGE CHINESE COMMUNITY, AND SUBSEQUENT ANTI-CHINESE RIOTS IN RANGOON LED TO STRONG PRC DENUNCIATIONS OF THE GUB AND TENSE RELATIONS BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES. THE CHINESE ALSO LAUNCHED A GREATLY ACCELERATED AID EFFORT FOR THE BCP, WHICH HAS BECOME A SERIOUS AND INTRACTABLE INTERNAL SECURITY PROBLEM FOR THE BURMESE. NE WIN CERTAINLY HAD THIS PROBLEM IN MIND WHEN HE SPOKE OF THE SUCCESSFUL NEGOTIATION OF THE BOUNDARY DISPUTE AND EXPRESSED CONFIDENCE THAT FRANK AND FRIENDLY DISCUSSIONS COULD RESOLVE OTHER PROBLEMS AS WELL. THE BURMESE PRESS WAS RATHER POINTED IN THE STRESS IT LAID OVER AND OVER AGAIN ON THE FIVE PRINCIPLES (I.E., MUTUAL RESPECT FOR EACH OTHER'S TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY AND SOVERIGNTY, NON-INTERFERENCE IN EACH OTHER'S INTERNAL AFFAIRS, ETC.). HOWEVER, WE SEE NO EVIDENCE THAT THE BURMESE MADE ANY PROGRESS TOWARD GETTING THE CHINESE TO REDUCE THEIR SUPPORT FOR THE BCP.

--CHINESE AIMS. WE DO NOT KNOW WHY THE PRC CHOSE BURMA AS THE FIRST COUNTRY TO WHICH TO SEND A NOTABLE LEADER FOLLOWING THE RECENT GOVERNMENT CHANGES. WE SUSPECT, HOWEVER, THAT IT WAS NOT BECAUSE OF ANY GREAT IMPORTANCE ATTACHED TO BURMA BY THE PRC OR ANY PARTICULAR REGARD FOR BURMA'S LEADERSHIP. THERE WAS, HOWEVER, A LONG-STANDING AND FAIRLY CLOSE RELATIONSHIP (AS SUCH RELATIONSHIPS GO) BETWEEN NE WIN AND CHOU EN-LAI, AND PERHAPS BURMA WAS A CONVENIENT PLAKE TO SEND CHOU'S WIDOW AT A TIME WHEN THE NEW CHINESE LEADERSHIP IS ANXIOUS TO CLAIM CHOU'S MANTLE. THE PRC MIGHT ALSO HAVE VIEWED THE VISIT AS A WAY OF BALANCING HUASKUO-FENG'S BANQUET FOR BCP LEADERS LAST NOVEMBER. WHILE WE DO NOT EXCLUDE THE POSSIBILITY THAT THE VISIT MIGHT SIGNAL A MORE MODERATE CHINESE STANCE ON

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SUPPORT OF NEIGHBORING INSURGENCIES SUCH AS THE BCP, IT SEEMS MORE LIKELY THAT THE CHINESE VIEWED THE VISIT AS ROUTINE, AND NOT OF ANY UNUSUAL IMPORTANCE. THEY SEEMED SURPRISED AT THE DISPROPORTIONATELY HIGH LEVEL ATTENTION GIVEN IT BY THE BURMESE. EVEN THE LOCAL HSINSUA CORRESPONDENT TOLD ONE OF HIS JOURNALIST COLLEAGUES THAT THE 21-GUN SALUTES WERE OUT OF PLACE SINCE, AFTER ALL, IT WAS NOT A STATE VISIT BUT ONLY A GOODWILL VISIT.

--SINO-SOVIET CONTEST. AS USUAL, THE CHINESE EMPHASIZED OPPOSITION TO "HEGEMONISM," BUT IN CONTRAST TO NE WIN'S DECEMBER 1975 VISIT TO CHINA, THERE WAS NO PUBLIC DENUNCIATION, OR EVEN MENTION, OF HEGEMONISM FROM THE BURMESE SIDE. BURMESE RELUCTANCE TO MAKE THE PROPER NOISES
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ON THIS SUBJECT MIGHT HELP--ALONG WITH THE LACK OF ANY CHINESE NOISES PERTINENT TO THE BORDER PROBLEM--TO EXPLAIN THE LACK OF A FINAL COMMUNIQUE. (MOFA ACTING DIRECTOR OF THE AMERICAS DIVISION INDICATED SURPRISE AT THIS LACK.) IN THE ABSENCE OF PROGRESS ON THE BCP ISSUE, IT IS HARD TO SEE HOW THE END RESULT OF MME CHOU'S VISIT COULD IMPROVE PRC-GUB RELATIONS TO THE DIADVANTAGE OF THE SOVIETS--OR ANYONE ELSE. THE SOVIET DCM HERE SAID THAT NO "BALANCING" HIGH-LEVEL SOVIET VISITS ARE PLANNED, THOUGH HE EXPRESSED HOPE THAT NE WIN WOULD MAKE HIS LONG-RUMORED AND LONG-DELAYED VISIT TO MOSCOW SOMETIME THIS YEAR.

--LOCAL REACTIONS. MOST BURMESE WE HAVE TALKED TO ARE UNHAPPY ABOUT WHAT THEY SEE AS NE WIN'S SUBSERVANCE TO THE CHINESE. THEY ARE PLEASED, HOWEVER, THAT CHINESE RESIDENTS WERE NOT PERMITTED TO ORGANIZE ANY DEMONSTRATIONS FOR MME CHOU. A RANKING BURMA ARMY OFFICER TOLD US (WITHOUT BEING ASKED) THAT THE VISIT DOES NOT SIGNAL ANY PRO-CHINESE OR ANTI-AMERICAN CHANGES IN GUB POLICY. "I STILL HATE THE CHINESE," HE SAID.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: FOREIGN RELATIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 15-Feb-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977RANGOO00450
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D770052-1221
Format: TEL
From: RANGOON
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t19770240/aaaabjob.tel
Line Count: 332
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 9b3b4bc6-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION EA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 7
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 77 RANGOON 366
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 06-Dec-2004 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 3318846
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: MADAME CHOU VISITS BURMA
TAGS: PFOR, OVIP, BM, CH, (CHOU EN-LAI), (TENG YING-CHAO)
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/9b3b4bc6-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
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Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009